

Limbum language

Limbum is a Grassfields language of Cameroon, with a small number of speakers in Nigeria. It is used as a trade language by some, but is primarily the mother tongue of the Wimbum people, who live in Donga-Mantung division of the Northwest Region, at the top of the Ring Road.

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Speakers

The Wimbum consist of three clans: War clan headquartered at Mbot, Tang clan at Tallah, and Wiya clan at Ndu.^[4] Scattered around are other Wimbum villages, each associated with one of the three clans. Each village has a chief, also known as fon, who is largely autonomous, and beneath him sub-chiefs or quarter-heads.^[5] The three clans are geographically interspersed, but share the language.^[4] The people live on the Nkambe Plateau, a dramatic grassy highland cut by wooded ravines, about a mile above sea level.^[6] Most are farmers, growing maize, beans, potatoes, yams, vegetable, tomatoes, bananas, and also plantains and coffee in lower, warmer areas.^{[7][8]} Some conduct trade, primarily in the towns of Nkambé and Ndu. Some work for the government, primarily in Nkambe.

Linguists consider Limbum to have three "dialects," which may be better called accents: a northern, a middle, and a southern dialect.^[9] Limbum is closely related to some neighboring languages like Yamba and more geographically distant ones like Bamum, Ngemba and Bamileke. It is quite different from some other neighboring languages like Bebe and Noni.^[10]

Grammar

Limbum's grammar is similar to English in some ways, including:

- Word order is generally subject–verb–object. For example, consider:
 - Ñgwa Tăta ā byε' kwaă.^[11] (*normal Limbum word order*)
 - Wife Tata has carried corn. (*word-for-word English translation, retaining Limbum word order*)

Limbum	
<i>Limbum</i>	
Region	Cameroon
Native speakers	130,000 (2005) ^[1]
Language family	Niger–Congo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Atlantic–Congo ▪ Benue–Congo ▪ Southern Bantoid ▪ Grassfields ▪ Eastern ▪ Nkambe ▪ Limbum
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	lmp
Glottolog	limb1268 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/limb1268) ^[2]
People	Wimbum ^[3]
Language	Limbum

- Tata's wife has carried corn. (*translation with conventional English word order*)
- Verb tenses tend to be formed with auxiliary verbs like "ã" in the example above.

But Limbum differs from English in other ways. Here are a few:

- An adjective tends to *follow* the noun it modifies.
- Limbum is a tone language, meaning that spoken pitch can distinguish words which otherwise sound the same. For example, the sound "baa" spoken with different tones can mean *father*, *fufu*, *two*, *bag*, *part in hair*, or *madness*.^[12]
- The pronoun system is quite different. For example, "ye" is a gender-neutral third person singular, taking the place of *he* and *she* in English. Moving to first and second person, "wɛ" means *you(singular)*, "wɛe" means *you(plural) and not I*, "sõ" means *you(singular) and I*, and "sẽe" means *(you(singular) and we) or (you(plural) and I)*. Also, Limbum has compound pronouns, which English lacks.^[13]

Sample vocabulary

ŋwɛ - person	fa - give	ŋɛp - fowl	boŋboŋ - good
njenwɛ - woman	ye - eat	nyaa - meat	bɛbɛp - bad
muu - child	laã - say	kwaã - corn	
ŋkar - friend	fã' - work	ndãp - house	baa - two
ma - mother	kõŋ - like or love	tap - hut	taar - three
ta - father	yɛ - see	afyoŋ - airplane	tâ - five
e - he or she	saŋ - write	ŋwã' - letter ^[14]	

Notes

1. Limbum (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/lmp/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Limbum" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/limb1268>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Blench, Roger (2019). *An Atlas of Nigerian Languages* (4th ed.). Cambridge: Kay Williamson Educational Foundation.
4. Pool, p. 33.
5. Kifon, p. 2-3.
6. Pool, p. 32.
7. Ndu.
8. Nkambe.
9. Fiore, p. 2.
10. Nkwi, p. 149.
11. Ndi, p. 10 and 65. In the transcriptions of Limbum on this page, I have followed the Ndis' spellings as best I can.
12. Fiore, p. 78.

13. Wepngong, p. 6.
14. Ndi, throughout.

References

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